



Jon Stewart presses for a breakthrough to get the first 9/11 troops full care

By TARA COPP
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The first U.S. troops to deploy after the Sept. 11 attacks are suffering from radiation exposure that the government has yet to officially recognize 23 years later. They are a final group of 9/11 service members that comedian Jon Stewart, a champion for first responders, can't leave behind. Special operations forces were sent to a former Soviet base in Uzbekistan in early October 2001, where they launched the first missions against the Taliban in Afghanistan, including the secret horseback operation depicted in the movie "12 Strong." Over the next four years, more than 15,000 U.S. troops deployed to Karshi-Khanabad, known as K2.



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U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Tyranae Murray, USS Somerset sailor of Victorville, Calif., places one of the last 40 flags, honoring the passengers and crew lost on Flight 93, in a display located on Harmon Street in Somerset County, Pa., Monday, Sept. 9, 2024.

Associated Press

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Jon Stewart presses for a breakthrough to get the first 9/11 troops full care

Continued from Front

Troops found clumps of yellow powder scattered near bunkers where Soviet troops had stored missiles. Testing showed it was radioactive uranium, according to a declassified November 2001 Defense Department assessment.

In the years since, thousands of K2 veterans have reported cancers, kidney problems and other medical conditions, some of which are known to be connected to radiation exposure. But exposure from K2 is not covered under a major veterans aid bill known as the PACT Act that President Joe Biden signed in 2022.

"K2 veterans were the tip of the spear. They were the first group deployed in the war on terror, and they are still on a lazy Susan of bureaucratic nonsense, keeping them from getting the benefits and health care that they earned," Stewart said in an interview this week with The Associated Press.

Stewart is pressing the Biden administration for changes to get the K2 veterans fully covered and he called into a meeting Monday between veterans and the Defense Department's assistant secretary for health affairs.

A 2001 Army health team site assessment found uranium littered around K2 in "pellets, discrete pockets of yellow residue, and finely distributed throughout the soil."

"Testing to date implies that the uranium is not depleted



Jon Stewart takes part in an interview outside the Department of Veterans Affairs, July 26, 2024 in Washington.

Associated Press

uranium but rather an enriched product," the now-declassified report found. Despite those records, the Defense Department has not officially identified the base as a location where radiation exposure took place. And the Department of Veterans Affairs has not added it to the presumptive conditions troops experienced there.

The White House has said it remains a priority for Biden, but has deferred to the agencies, which say more information is needed.

"President Biden believes veterans harmed by toxic exposures while they were stationed at K2 should have access to the benefits they earned and deserve," White House spokesperson Kelly Scully said in a statement to the AP.

The Pentagon also said in a statement it "remains committed to thoroughly reviewing all information related to K2" and that "ensuring the health and safety of our service members and veterans remains a top

priority."

VA spokesman Terrence Hayes said in a statement that since the passage of the PACT Act almost 12,000 K2 veterans have been approved for at least one service-related condition and have received an average yearly payment of \$30,871 to compensate them for the disabilities they now have.

But K2 veterans have also died waiting for the Pentagon and the VA to recognize their radiation-related illness claims, and further studies and reviews just prolong the process, said Matt Erpelding, who leads the K2 veterans group Stronghold Freedom Foundation.

"It needs to get done now," said Erpelding, who deployed to K2 as a C-130 pilot in December 2001.

Based on a review of the declassified K2 data, radiation levels documented at K2 in 2001 were as much as 40,000 times what would have registered if the uranium was naturally occurring, said Arjun Makhijani, a nu-

clear fusion specialist and president of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research.

Radiation exposure from uranium can damage kidneys, create a risk for bone cancer and affect pregnancies, among other harmful effects, said Makhijani, who previously worked with veterans sickened by radiation at the Bikini Atoll during nuclear weapons tests in the 1940s.

The VA does not have statistics on how many of the 15,000-plus troops deployed at K2 got sick. The veterans grassroots organization has contacted about 5,000 of them, and more than 1,500 reported serious medical conditions, including cancers, kidney and bone problems, reproductive issues and birth defects.

U.S. forces left the base in 2005. Since then, Uzbekistan has taken on a greater role in regional counterterrorism efforts, particularly after the U.S. lost its foothold in Afghanistan after the 2021 withdrawal.

Just over a dozen U.S. troops have been regularly deployed to Uzbekistan over the last few years, according to Pentagon data. Uzbek Gen. Maj. Shukhrat Khalmukhamedov met with Gen. CQ Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the Pentagon on Monday to discuss shared efforts to defeat the Islamic State group and "Uzbekistan's desire to develop a strategic partnership with the U.S.," a readout from Brown's office said.

K2 did not come up, according to a U.S. official

who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the private meeting.

The veterans don't understand why U.S. agencies will not officially acknowledge the radiation exposure, particularly because it's been reported in agency documents.

"They're clearly weirdly sensitive about this place," Stewart said.

Congress obtained detailed environmental assessments of the base and reams of data from the Pentagon and made it public four years ago in a bipartisan effort to get the K2 veterans' toxic exposure recognized. Rep. Stephen Lynch, D-Mass., and Rep. Mark Green, R-Tenn., recently announced new legislation to that end.

In response to multiple queries by the AP, officials at the White House, VA and Defense Department have pointed to other aspects of expanded care for K2 veterans — both from the PACT Act and supplemental care that the VA announced last month adding more conditions that they face.

When it comes to the radiation exposure, the government refers to a Johns Hopkins study on depleted uranium impact on veterans that won't be complete until 2031, the 30th anniversary of the attacks.

"Because DOD, and by extension the VA, do not acknowledge it was there, it is a sticking point for every K2 bill or rule and was left out of the PACT Act because it was nonnegotiable," K2 veteran Mark Jackson said. □

Speaker Johnson pushes ahead on funding bill with proof of citizenship mandate despite dim prospects

By KEVIN FREKING

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) —

House Speaker Mike Johnson vowed Tuesday to press ahead with requiring proof of citizenship for new voters as part of a bill to avoid a partial government shutdown in three weeks, though the measure appeared likely to be voted down.

Democrats overwhelmingly oppose the measure. Enough Republicans were also coming out against the bill, though for different reasons, that its prospects of passing the House appeared dim. Even if it does pass the House on Wednesday, the bill would go nowhere in the Senate.

Johnson said the issue of election security is too critical to ignore, though research has shown that voting by non-citizens is extremely rare. It's also clear that Republicans see value in making House Democrats take another vote on the issue. The House approved a bill with the proof of citizenship mandate back in July. "If you have a few thousand illegals participate in the election in the wrong place, you can change the makeup of Congress and you can affect the presidential election," Johnson said. "The American people understand that."

The first test for the stopgap spending bill came Tuesday with a 209-206 vote that kept it moving ahead. But some Republicans who have said they will oppose the bill on final passage allowed it to proceed.

The measure includes a six-month extension of federal funding to keep agencies and programs operating through March 28.

But Democrats want a shorter-term extension so that the current Congress will set full-year spending levels for fiscal year 2025 rather than the next president and Congress. They also want the proof of citizenship mandate stripped out of the bill, saying it's unnecessary because states already have effective safeguards in place to



House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., talks to reporters as he arrives at the Capitol in Washington, Monday, Sept. 9, 2024.

verify voters' eligibility and maintain accurate voter rolls.

"Is it any surprise that the speaker's purely partisan CR seems to be running into trouble?" Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said, using Washington parlance for the short-term continuing resolution needed to prevent a shutdown. "The answer is very simple. The House should stop wasting time on a CR proposal that cannot become law." Schumer called on Johnson to consult with Democratic leaders and the White House on a bipartisan package that can pass both chambers.

A few House Republicans have also come out against the bill. Some won't vote for any continuing resolution. They want Congress to return to passing the dozen annual appropriations bills individually. Others say the continuing resolution funds programs at levels they consider inappropriate at a time of nearly \$2 trillion annual deficits.

"I'm a firm no on bankrupting the nation and a yes on election integrity," said Rep. Cory Mills, R-Fla., in announcing his opposition. Rep. Tim Burchett, R-Tenn., said Republican leadership was asking him to vote for what he called "a Nancy Pelosi-Schumer budget."

"I just think that's a bad idea," Burchett said.

Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky.,

said on X that the continuing resolution was "an insult

to Americans' intelligence." "The CR doesn't cut spend-

ing, and the shiny object attached to it will be dropped like a hot potato before passage," Massie said.

Republicans can afford to lose only four votes from their ranks if every Democrat votes against the bill. Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump on Tuesday seemingly encouraged a government shutdown if Republicans in the House and Senate "don't get assurances on Election Security." He said on the social media platform Truth Social that they should not go forward with a continuing resolution without such assurances.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell disagreed when asked about Trump's post. □

Associated Press

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EPA says Vermont fails to comply with Clean Water Act through inadequate regulation of some farms

By **LISA RATHKE**
Associated Press

Flaws in a Vermont program are preventing the state from controlling phosphorus discharges from certain farms, contributing to severe water quality problems in Lake Champlain and other bodies of water, according to a letter from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to state officials. The Monday letter to the secretary of the Vermont Natural Resources Agency says the program is failing to comply with the Clean Water Act. It directs the state to make significant changes in how it regulates water pollution from concentrated animal feeding operations, or CAFOs, which raise animals in confinement.

There are 37 large and 104 medium CAFOs in Vermont, along with 1,000 small farms that might be considered such operations, according to the EPA.

Two state agencies Natural Resources and Agriculture Food and Markets regulate agricultural water pollution in Vermont, which is where the problem lies, the letter states. The division of responsibilities "is interfering with the regulation of Vermont's CAFOs and preventing Vermont from adequately addressing agricultural water quality," wrote



Sailboats and a passenger ferry dot Lake Champlain as seen from Battery Park, Aug. 14, 2015 in Burlington, Vt.

Associated Press

David Cash, EPA administrator for Region 1 in Boston. Excess phosphorus runoff from farms, roads and urban areas has fueled toxic algae blooms Lake Champlain, sometimes forcing the closure of beaches. Sources of excess phosphorus into lakes and waterways include fertilizers, leaking septic systems or discharges from wastewater treatment plants, according to the EPA.

The EPA mandated that the state clean up Lake Champlain and in 2016 released new phosphorus pollution limits for the water body.

In Monday's letter, the EPA concluded that the Agency of Natural Resources must be responsible for CAFO permitting, monitoring, and enforcement, which includes doing routine farm inspections, enforcing management plans for the placement of manure and other nutrients on fields, and administering discharge permits. Vermont Natural Resources Secretary Julie Moore said Tuesday that the agency takes its obligations under the Clean Water Act very seriously.

"At the same time I think it's

really important to reflect that this is sort of about the operation and administration of government and should not be taken as a reflection on the work being done by farmers," she said. The state has regulated farms through no-discharge permits issued by the Agriculture Agency, "so nothing is allowed to leave the farm," Moore said. The EPA is showing that there is evidence of occasional discharges from farms, often in response to severe weather, she said. The Conservation Law Foundation, the Vermont Natural

Resources Council and the Lake Champlain Committee, an advocacy organization, petitioned the EPA in 2022 to take corrective action or withdraw its authorization of the program related to the regulation of CAFO farms. The foundation released EPA's letter on Monday, and Elena Mihaly, vice president of Conservation Law Foundation Vermont, said it's a step in the right direction. Similar concerns were raised in a 2008 petition filed by the Vermont Law School Environmental and Natural Resources Law Clinic that resulted in a corrective action plan in 2013 in which the state agreed to take steps to improve parts of its program, including its dealings with CAFOs, the letter states. It's clear that Vermont has not adequately addressed deficiencies in its CAFO program or complied with the requirements of the 2013 plan, Cash wrote in the letter to the state.

"EPA has closely observed program operations in Vermont for well over a decade and despite having had ample time and opportunity to cure longstanding program deficiencies, many of which were outlined in the 2008 withdrawal petition, ANR has failed to do so," Cash wrote. □

Cuomo defends COVID-19 nursing home decisions in combative House committee hearing

By **MICHAEL HILL**
Associated Press

Former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo began testifying Tuesday in a

combative congressional subcommittee hearing centered on his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic as the virus began to



Former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo listens to remarks while attending a meeting, March 17, 2022, in New York.

Associated Press

spread through the state's nursing homes in 2020. Members of the Republican-led House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic released a report ahead of Cuomo's testimony that accused the Democrat of staging a "cover up" to hide mistakes that endangered nursing home residents. During the hearing, Cuomo fiercely defended his administration's actions during the pandemic and said the subcommittee was seeking to turn attention away from former President Donald Trump's pandemic leadership fail-

ures. Cuomo told the panel that its report "provides no evidence to support Trump's main allegation, repeated for three years, that New York's guidance killed thousands in nursing homes. In fact, the report finds no causality whatsoever. Not one death." Cuomo resigned from office in August 2021 amid sexual harassment allegations, which he denies. Cuomo was widely seen as a reassuring figure in the early months of the pandemic, but his reputation suffered after revelations that his administration released an incomplete ac-

counting of the number of deaths at nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Critics have also zeroed in on a directive issued in March of 2020 that initially barred nursing homes from refusing to accept patients just because they'd had COVID-19. The order was issued to keep hospitals from becoming overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients who were no longer sick enough to require hospitalization, but needed nursing home care for other conditions and couldn't simply be discharged or sent home. □

North Korea's Kim vows to make his nuclear force ready for combat with U.S.

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and
KIM TONG-HYUNG

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) —

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to redouble efforts to make his nuclear force fully ready for combat with the United States and its allies, state media reported Tuesday, after the country disclosed a new platform likely designed to fire more powerful intercontinental ballistic missiles targeting the mainland U.S.

Kim has repeatedly made similar pledges, but his latest threat comes as outside experts believe Kim will perform provocative weapons tests ahead of the U.S. presidential election in November. In recent days, North Korea has also resumed launches of trash-carrying balloons toward South Korea.

In a speech marking the 76th founding anniversary for his government on Monday, Kim said North Korea faces "a grave threat" because of what he called "the reckless expansion" of a U.S.-led regional military bloc that is now developing into a nuclear-based one. Kim said such a development is pushing North Korea to boost its military capability, according to the official Korean



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un delivers a speech, marking the country's 76th founding anniversary in Pyongyang, North Korea Monday, Sept. 9, 2024.

Central News Agency.

Kim said North Korea will "redouble its measures and efforts to make all the armed forces of the state including the nuclear force fully ready for combat," KCNA said.

North Korea has been protesting the July signing of a new U.S.-South Korean defense guideline meant to integrate U.S. nuclear weapons and South Korean conventional weapons to cope with growing North Korean

nuclear threats. North Korea said the guideline revealed its adversaries' plots to invade the country. U.S. and South Korean officials have repeatedly said they don't intend to attack the country. Since 2022, North Korea has significantly accelerated its weapons testing activities in a bid to perfect its capabilities to launch strikes on the U.S. and South Korea.

The U.S. and South Korea have responded by expand-

ing military drills that North Korea calls invasion rehearsals. Many analysts believe North Korea has some last remaining technological barriers to overcome to acquire long-range nuclear missiles that can reach the U.S. mainland, though it likely already possesses missiles that can hit key targets in South Korea and Japan.

South Korean officials and experts say North Korea could conduct nuclear tests

or ICBM test-launches before the U.S. election to increase its leverage in future diplomacy with the U.S. Observers say North Korea likely thinks a greater nuclear capability would help it win U.S. concessions like sanctions relief. North Korea as of Tuesday morning did not appear to have staged any major military demonstration to mark this year's anniversary.

But the North's main Rodong Sinmun newspaper on Sunday published a photo of Kim inspecting what appeared to be a 12-axle missile launch vehicle, which would be the largest the country has shown so far, during a visit to a munitions plant.

This sparked speculation that the North could be developing a new ICBM that is bigger than its current Hwasong-17 ICBM, which is launched on an 11-axle vehicle.

When asked about the photo on Monday, Pentagon spokesperson Maj.Gen. Pat Ryder refused to provide a specific assessment of North Korea's missile capabilities and reiterated that Washington was working closely with Seoul, Tokyo and other partners to preserve regional security and deter potential attacks. □

Associated Press

Swiss city councilor apologizes for firing gun at a Mary and Jesus poster

By JAMEY KEATEN

Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — A city councilor in Switzerland has apologized and reportedly sought police protection against threats after she fired a sport pistol at an auction poster of a 14th-century Madonna and child painting and posted images of their bullet-ridden faces on social media. Green-Liberal party official Sanija Ameti, 32, put the images on Instagram over the weekend before quickly pulling them down. She later said she had been practicing shots from about 10 meters (33 feet) and found the poster as "big enough" for a suitable target.

"I apologize to the people who were hurt by my post. I deleted it immediately when I realized its religious content. I didn't think about it," Ameti wrote on X. "I'm incredibly sorry."

The Green-Liberal party in Zurich said she had resigned from its leadership. Beat Rüfenacht, its co-president, said he heard that Ameti was "in a safe place, and she's OK." Ameti did not respond to an attempt by The Associated Press to reach her through social media. Kath.ch, a site of the media center for the Roman Catholic Church in Switzerland, said Swiss bishops condemned the shooting, saying that "this hurts

the religious sensibilities of many Catholics." The site said Ameti had reached out by email to say she and her family "placed themselves under police protection due to threats."

Farner Group, a consulting firm where Ameti worked, said in an email that it had decided Monday to "terminate the employment relationship."

The images continued to circulate in Swiss media and online Tuesday. Daily 20 Minutes published a photo of Ameti standing in what looks like a stone-paneled crypt and pointing a pistol. Another frame showed bullet holes in the haloed heads and faces of

Mary and Jesus.

The poster, an advertisement from auction house Koller, showed details of the work "Madonna with

Child and the Archangel Michael" by 14th-century Italian painter Tommaso del Mazza that is set to go up for sale on Sept. 20. □



Sanija Ameti, Co-President In Operation Libero, poses for a portrait on Nov. 2, 2021, at Proger in Bern.

Associated Press

Jamaica to deploy a limited number of soldiers and police to help fight gangs in Haiti

By DÁNICA COTO

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)

— Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness announced Tuesday that his country would send two dozen soldiers and police officers to Haiti this week to boost a U.N.-backed mission led by Kenya to fight violent gangs. The 20 soldiers and four police officers are scheduled to arrive Thursday and will join nearly 400 Kenyan police who arrived earlier this year and are working alongside Haitian police and military, said Vice Admiral Antonette Wemyss-Gorman, chief of defense staff for Jamaica's military.

The Jamaicans will be responsible for providing command, planning and logistics support, Holness said at a news conference.

Jamaica had pledged a total of 170 soldiers and 30 police officers, but Holness said it wasn't possible to deploy them all at once.

"It's not practical," he said, adding that facilities to host those arriving and a command structure need to be in place before the full number pledged is deployed. "We want a very successful operation."



The commander of the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission Godfrey Otunge, right, and the Haitian National Police general director Rameau Normil chat as they await the arrival of U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Thursday, Sept. 5, 2024.

Associated Press

The initial number of police and soldiers announced by Holness surprised many and comes at a time when the U.S. government has warned that the Kenyan-led mission lacks money and personnel as it considers a U.N. peacekeeping mission as one way to secure more resources. In recent days, the U.N. and Ecuador circulated a draft resolution obtained by The

Associated Press asking the U.N. to start planning for a U.N. peacekeeping operation to replace the current mission.

Such a proposal would have to be decided by the U.N. Security Council, which experts do not believe would approve it.

On Monday, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said "it's very strange" that

there is apparently no money available to support the Kenyan-led mission.

"I think countries should assume responsibilities and should come and provide the necessary funding," he said.

Holness did not comment on the possibility of a U.N. peacekeeping mission but said the current mission "can be a long and extended pro-

cess."

He added that the mission is not the only or final solution to problems in Haiti, where gangs control 80% of the capital of Port-au-Prince.

The violence has spread to other areas across the country, with more than 3,200 killed from January to May, according to the U.N. The ongoing violence also has left more than half a million people homeless in recent years.

"Haiti is the example of what could happen if states and governments do not take the problem seriously and put in place the measures and resources necessary to bring the problem under control," Holness said.

Overall, the mission is expected to have a total of 2,500 personnel, with the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin and Chad also pledging to send police and soldiers, although it wasn't clear when that would happen.

On Saturday, the Bahamas' foreign affairs minister, Fred Mitchell, told reporters that while the government hasn't wavered in its pledge, it's unclear when it'll deploy troops to Haiti given that the mission's dynamics have changed. □

During Brazil's worst drought, wildfires rage and the Amazon River falls to a record low

By FABIANO MAISONNAVE

Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — Brazil is enduring its worst drought

since nationwide measurements began over seven decades ago, with 59% of the country under stress an



Fires spread through the environmental protection area of Pouso Alto, in Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park, during dry season, in Colinas do Sul, Goiás state, Brazil, Monday, Sept. 9, 2024.

Associated Press

area roughly half the size of the U.S.

Major Amazon basin rivers are registering historic lows, and uncontrolled man-made wildfires have ravaged protected areas and spread smoke over a vast expanse, plummeting air quality.

"This is the first time that a drought has covered all the way from the North to the country's Southeast," Ana Paula Cunha, a researcher at the National Center for Monitoring and Early Warning of Natural Disasters, said in a statement Thursday. "It is the most intense and widespread drought in history."

Smoke on Monday afternoon caused Sao Paulo, a

metropolitan area of 21 million people, to breathe the second most polluted air in the world after Lahore, Pakistan, according to data gathered by IQAir, a Swiss air technology company.

About 1,100 kilometers (683 miles) to the north, a wildfire is sweeping through Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park, one of Brazil's most famous tourism sites.

"This year, the dry season started much earlier than in previous years, whereas the rain season was intense yet short," Nayara Stacheski, head of the park, told The Associated Press. "The wind is strong, the air humidity is very low and it's extremely hot. All this worsens the

wildfire." On Monday, there was one uncontrolled wildfire in a remote area. A helicopter was expected to arrive to transport firefighters. Another fire was controlled by 80 firefighters, with support from two aircraft. Two other fires were threatening to enter the park.

The blazes in one of the few protected areas of Cerrado, the Brazilian savanna, are just the latest drama in the country beset by months of blazes. From the beginning of the year until Sept. 8, Brazil registered almost 160,000 fires, the worst year since 2010. In Pantanal, the world's largest wetland area, it has been the second worst fire year on record. □



Snakes you may encounter on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—If you have ever or will ever go off-roading on the island, you may encounter three types of snakes that are dominant on the island. The Cascabel, Santanero and Boa differ from each other in a couple ways, and local perspective on each one may help you understand what you need to do if you ever were to encounter one during your touring session on the island.

Cascabel (*Crotalus unicolor*)

The small Cascabel or Aruba Island Rattlesnake averages 70 cm in length. The body color is often uniform gray or light brown. There may be a faint pattern of diamond shaped markings on the back. This pattern is most noticeable on younger snakes. The most distinctive feature of this snake is the rattle at the end of its tail which makes a buzzing sound when the snake is alarmed. Cascabels are shy and not aggressive, but their venom can be dangerous to humans. In fact, it's the only venomous snake native to the island. It is best to leave this snake alone. Do not attempt to catch or kill it, as it could not only be dangerous, but this snake is also endemic to the island, and its preservation has become a legal mandate for all residents and visitors.

Cascabels hunt by waiting under bushes and fruiting trees to

catch passing lizards, mice, rats, small rabbits, and an occasional bird. This is often considered to be one of the rarest rattlesnakes in the world. The range of the Cascabel is restricted to the rugged and mountainous areas of the island mostly within Arikok National Park. The Arikok National Park was designated in the early 1980s to include most of the rattlesnake's population, providing a safe refuge in which the snake can be protected and monitored. The government has also implemented outreach and education initiatives to change local perception of the snake and highlight its ecological and economic importance – it is now being promoted as a national symbol. Arikok's partnership with the Toledo zoo has safeguarded the rattlesnake ex-situ and led to a number of research projects collecting critical data on the Cascabel's abundance, life history and habitat requirement to help guide future conservation efforts.

Santanero

The slender Santanero or Aruban Cat-eyed Snake is a small fella, typically less than 50 cm long. This snake is recognizable by the large scales on the top of its head and by its pattern of dark brown bands alternating with light brown bands. The belly is plain white or cream colored without any markings. Native as well to the island, this snake is shy and not aggressive. However, it has enlarged teeth at the back of its mouth and mild venom which is not dangerous to humans, but can paralyze small lizards and frogs. Santaneros are most active at night when they search for food. During the day, they hide under rocks or leaves. They frequently climb trees and cactus. Santaneros eat toads, frogs, insects, and lizards. You may find Santaneros near dams during periods of rainy weather or crossing roads at night. This snake is found island wide. A Santanero in your garden will keep away the unwanted insects. If you encounter a Santanero around your garden, please do not harm this species.



Boa (*Boa constrictor*)

Boas are Aruba's largest snakes. The longest Boa found on the island was slightly less than 3 m. Newborn Boas average 35 cm. Boas are not venomous but are what is called constrictor snakes; they kill by wrapping themselves around a prey and suffocating them. The most distinctive feature of a Boa is its pattern of dark brown and tan blotches which become red toward the tail. The belly is white or cream colored with numerous black spots. Boas are excellent climbers and may be found in trees and cactus. Boas also hide in the leaves under bushes waiting to catch prey that pass. Boas catch their prey with their teeth

and then constrict it in their coils. The Boa's diet consists of birds, lizards, rats, mice, and rabbits. Large Boas have been known to eat small goats and chickens. When threatened, Boas will hiss loudly.

Boas are a non-native species and are invasive to the island, risking the population of native lizards and birds. The first Boas were reported on the island in 1999. Since that time they have been found across the entire island in all types of habitats. If you ever encounter a Boa, please do not approach it. Instead, please call the Arikok National Park, as they are experienced in handling Boas. □





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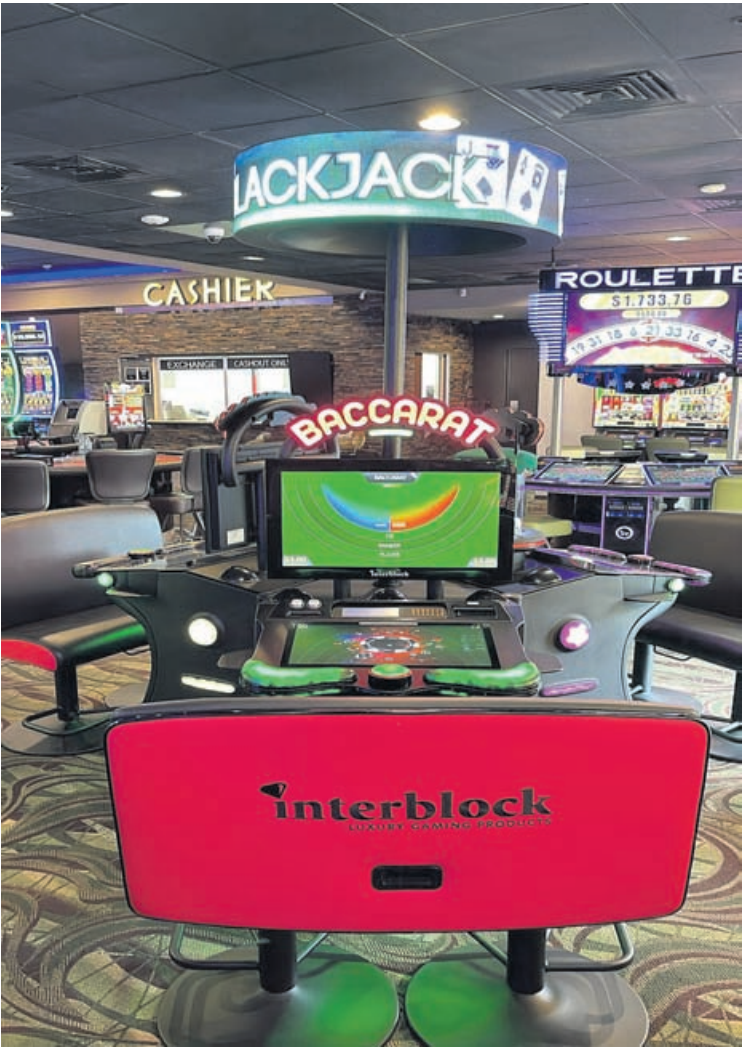
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Ever heard of the cah'i orgel? A key instrument in Aruban folklore music

(Oranjestad)—The cah'i orgel music box is an important and unique instrument that is used on the ABC islands in the Dutch Caribbean. This instrument is a staple in our folklore music, and its significance in the traditions of Aruba has and continues to bring together the old and young.

The origin of the cah'i orgel is said to have come from Europe around 150 years ago. A cross breed between the barrel piano and the organ, the most popular stories said that the instrument came from either England or Germany, but made its way to Italy down to Venezuela, where in 1881, Mr. Horatio Sprock (1866-1949) from Curacao was first introduced to it.

After that, Sprock made his own cah'i orgel "Josefina", and successfully debuted it on the streets of Barquisimeto. Back in Curacao, he started his own cah'i orgel business along with his brother Luis. In Aruba, it is said that the cah'i orgel was introduced by Rufo Wever, who later in his career became one of the composers for the Aruban national anthem.

Rufo Wever was a young musician in 1937 when he established his own cah'i orgel business on the island. Before that he experimented with his uncle's cah'i orgel, and he over the years he learned to build and repair the instrument. In fact, he was incredibly skilled in this, and he was one of the few to have

recognized from the start that the cah'i orgel is an instrument that needs preserving.

As mentioned, the cah'i orgel is a music box. made from mahogany wood, it contains a cylinder with a maximum of eight music pieces. By rotating the lever on the front side of the box, the cah'i orgel produces music similar to that of a piano, and is accompanied often by someone else playing the "wiri", a percussion instrument made out of steel and reminiscent to the Spanish guiro. Back then, you would often also find someone playing the triangle alongside the cah'i orgel and wiri. In Aruba, the cah'i orgel and wiri is used for traditional music genres, such as the Aruban waltz,



tumba, mazurka and more.

Fun fact: another name for the cah'i orgel is the "tingilingi box."□

Source: "E Cilinder Magico entre Aruba y Curaçao" by Marilyn Alcalá-Wallé, Herta Parabirsing-Balentina and Nidia Rosaria-Wallé.

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Casa del Mar Beach Resort – Your own piece of Aruba, a hidden gem

History

If you have been a regular visitor to Aruba since the 1970's, you probably recall the Sun Development group, who at that time were ahead of the times in introducing timeshare to Aruba and using the latest construction techniques around the island.

As pioneers in Aruba's tourism industry, Sun Development opened the doors of Casa del Mar Beach Resort Phase I in October 1986. The two-bedroom Presidential suites were introduced and well received. As Aruba's tourism began to take off, Sun Development led the way. With Phase I sold out and demand for more inventory increasing almost daily, the second phase of Casa del Mar Beach Resort was announced in July 1987 and opened in January 1989, with many existing members buying or upgrading suites in Phase II.

In 1989, a separate building, the Ambassador Building, was constructed across the street, adding 40 additional one-bedroom suites to Casa del Mar Beach Resort. Today, the resort consists of 147 well-appointed suites in total.

The resort

Casa del Mar Beach Resort is where a world-famous white sandy beach meets the clear blue Caribbean waters. Whether you are looking for a romantic getaway or a fun-filled family vacation with water sports and activities, Casa del Mar Beach Resort has it all. Located on Eagle Beach, ranked among the top 10 beaches in the world, this resort offers a truly unforgettable experience. Their recently renovated suites provide you with a private and luxurious retreat, allowing you to enjoy **"Your own piece of Aruba."**

The resort offers a variety of on-property amenities and concessionaires, including Matthews



Beach Side Restaurant, Santos Coffee with Soul, Clinical Massage Spa, Thrifty Car Rental, Island Trendz, and a recently renovated pickleball and tennis court. Members and guests can enjoy two pool areas, a mini-market, and Pelican Adventures with in-house concierge services, as well as many activities for all ages. The resort is also surrounded by multiple fine dining restaurants, all within walking distance. The suites are spacious and luxurious, accommodating families of four to six people, depending on the suite type. These suites are available to both transient guests and through lifelong ownership via timeshare purchase.

What to expect

Experience all that Casa del Mar Beach Resort has to offer by booking your next stay with them. You will enjoy a warm and welcoming Caribbean ambience, with a staff always ready to assist with anything you need. Many still come to the island with their families or have handed their timeshare down to the next generation, who grew up loving Aruba and continue to bring

their own kids here to experience the resort and people of this beautiful island.

Buying "Your own piece of Aruba"

Casa del Mar Beach Resort offers an impressive array of accommodations, from one-bedroom suites to renovated two-bedroom suites

with breathtaking oceanfront, serene garden-side, and vibrant pool views. Members and guests enjoy the flexibility of exchanging their suite for points to use at various locations worldwide, year-round access to the stunning property, and numerous additional benefits.

Casa del Mar Beach Resort offers some of the lowest maintenance fees on the island and provides the opportunity to purchase a preferred week and suite type. This purchase guarantees lifelong ownership that can be passed down to future generations.

Schedule a brief tour without any further obligation with their Sales Agent during your current vacation and receive a free day pass in return with a welcome drink from Matthews Beach Side Restaurant while overlooking the beach.

For more information, visit their website at www.casadelmar-aruba.com, where you can find everything you need to explore **"Your own piece of Aruba."** □





Article by Etnia Nativa

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Etnia Nativa is close to high rise Hotels



Sargassum, its beneficial properties

Episode CCLXX - 270

Etnia Nativa is Aruba's unique native experience opportunity, where education is combined with entertainment. Share and interact with our exclusive team. Access this private facility and tour a beautiful property made with reused materials collected by its concept developer, our top columnist, avocational archaeologist, and island's cultural expert. Book a mind-opening encounter and dive deep into the navel of the island.

In this new weekly episode, Etnia Nativa delves into the fertilizing quality, among others, of the seagrass known as sargassum (*F. sargassaceae*), an important algae widely distributed in tropical and subtropical oceans.

It could be really huge for any Caribbean country's economy because it can also be used to make a slew of products, from plastic- and leather-like materials to biofuels and cosmetics. If these industries become large enough, they could collectively keep sargassum off the beaches.

Larger seasonal waves stir and loosen the algae from the corals that eventually wash ashore, covering the beaches on the west and north coasts of Aruba in seaweed and seagrass. Nowadays, when sargassum invades the beaches in front of hotels, it is the hotels themselves who are keeping them clean of sargassum.

A traditional native custom was carried out through the Department of Public Works (known locally as DOW), which, by taking charge of beach cleaning tasks, made it accessible for traditional native farmers to collect it for the purpose of fertilizing their "cunucu," which are traditional agricultural plots of our "Caquetian" ancestors.

Sargassum contains a large amount of nutrients, minerals, and microorganisms that can promote and even accelerate plant growth, such as iron, magnesium, potassium, calcium, and more, thus causing plants to have a better and healthier performance compared when applying synthetic fertilizers. There are over 300 sargassum species. Different species of Sargassum have folk applications in human nutrition and are considered a rich source of vitamins, carot-



enoids, proteins, and minerals. The name was given by Portuguese sailors when they found it in great numbers in the so-called Sargasso Sea. The name originated from the woolly rock rose (*Halimium lasianthum*), which they saw growing in the water wells of their homes and which was called sargassum in Portuguese. Although the seaweed acquired a legendary reputation for covering the entire Sargasso Sea, making navigation very difficult and almost impossible, it has since been discovered that it is only found in drifts.

In some Caribbean countries, different species of Sargassum are cultivated for use as an herbal remedy. Many

Chinese herbalists prescribe powdered sargassum—either the species *S. pallidum* or *S. fusiforme*—in doses of 0.5 grams dissolved in warm water and drunk as a tea. The medical tea is called *hǎizǎo* in traditional Chinese medicine, where it is used to resolve "heat phlegm."

Sargasso presents risks to human health as well. In the water, it's harmless to humans, but the trouble begins once it lands on the beach and starts to decompose. Breathing in these toxic fumes may cause skin irritation and respiratory and neurocognitive symptoms for those who come into close contact with the degrading sargassum. You can read and learn more details about Sargassum through our cultural blog, "Island Insight," episode 134, "Sargasso Sea Weed."

If you liked our native stories and are interested in learning the true identity of Aruba, a visit to Etnia Nativa would be a fantastic choice. It has been a trend setter since 1994, as a co-founder of projects such as Arikok National Park, the Archaeological Museum, and the Artisan Foundation, among others. Every week, this newspaper continues to share its valuable knowledge. Don't miss the opportunity to feel the island's spirit through learning real stories that are not just remembered; they resonate, they're felt, and they stir souls. Book your visit: WhatsApp +297 592 2702 etnianaativa03@gmail.com □



Inauguration of Parliament: a colorful celebration with little substance



ORANJESTAD – While it was initially reported that the inauguration ceremony for the new Parliamentary Year would not go through as planned following the resignation of the Government of Aruba – and thus the dissolution of Parliament – the ceremony took place yesterday with participation of members of Parliament, the demissionary government, and the Governor of Aruba.

Traditionally, the ceremony for the inauguration of the new Parliamentary Year is

focused on the plans of the Government of Aruba for the following year. The Governor of Aruba, His Excellency Mr. Alfonso Boekhoudt gives a speech in which he reviews the achievements of the past year and outlines the plans for the coming year. This year however, after the coalition government collapsed due to an internal dispute between the coalition partners on Monday, the Governor's speech was focused on the upcoming elections, scheduled for December 6.

The Governor's speech, which was shorter than usual, also lacked substance, given that it could not outline the plan for the Government of Aruba for the coming year. The event did display the usual pageantry, with a parade and the usual elegant and colorful fashion worn by Aruba's political elite.

It did have a new twist, however: for the first time, the presidency of Parliament was not held by a member of the traditional MEP or AVP parties; rather, it went to Ray-



mond Kamperveen, a member of the junior party in the demissionary coalition, Raiz.

The current Parliament will sit for only three months before

Aruban voters are called to elect a new Parliament in December, and the winner of that election will be asked by the Governor to form a new government. □



Exploring the Mainstreet of San Nicolas

SAN NICOLAS— At Just 11 miles southeast from Oranjestad you will enter the city San Nicolas, also known as Sunrise City or Chocolate City. A city that is rich in authentic culture and island charm. San Nicolas is Aruba's second largest city and was once a bustling company town dominated by the oil industry since the early 1930's.

Over the course of four decades, its demographics had changed immensely due to a stream of Afro-Caribbean and South American workers who came to fill the jobs in the oil refinery between the 1920's until the 1960's. To this day traces of the multicultural influences in culinary offerings and customs, housing and population are clearly visible in San Nicolas - more than anywhere else on the island.

Flow of history

if you are looking for history San Nicolas has it. Here you will find three amazing museums, The Museum of Industry, the Community Museum and the Carnival Euphoria, all within walking distance from one another. The Museum of Industry is situated in the Water Tower in San Nicolas and narrates Aruba's industrial history which began in the 19th century. Here you will learn about gold, aloe, phosphate, oil and the tourism industries which made San Nicolas once a bustling business center. Experience the touching stories of those who were part of this history. Nicolaas Store built in 1940 and renovated in 2014 is the home of the Community Museum. The collection is remarkable and spans millennia. Ancient fossils stand next to tableaus of an authentically recreated colonial kitchen and bedroom

and 19th-century barber-shop, just to name a few of the items of old-time Aruba that has been preserved. A collection of artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific importance can be found here for the purpose of education or enjoyment. Carnival Euphoria is showcasing Aruba's Carnival. See how are Carnival has developed over the past 65 years.

The new San Nicolas

In the shadow of the refinery, an art capital is quietly beginning to grow. This is the new San Nicolas, a place that is starting to become a magnet for all that is young, cool and hip in Aruba. Indeed, San Nicolas has all of the ingredients of an emerging cultural hub — varied history, interesting architecture, and, perhaps most importantly, an urban layout that makes it walk-



able. As you walk around, the streets are silent but the walls are loud, filled with bright, colorful murals painted by a collection of artists from around the world. Thanks to the efforts of various art organizations in Aruba, such as Art Rules Aruba and Aruba Art Fair, San Nicolas has had quite the aesthetic makeover with regards to vibrant street art. Each year more and more stunning murals are replacing broken down buildings with colorful art pieces that keep brightening up SunriseCity.

Must See, Do, Buy & Eat

A little bit of everything can be found in the main street. Stores selling shoes, clothing, jewelry you name it. Arts & crafts by Cosecha store & Creative Center, a design store in which you can immerse yourself in discovering genuine and locally made arts and crafts which reflect the diversification of the Aruban craft heritage and the artistic supply of artisans. Don't miss out on trying the exquisite food offered by the cafes and restaurants or just enjoy a peaceful walk admiring the murals, mosaic benches and all the history San Nicolas has to offer. □

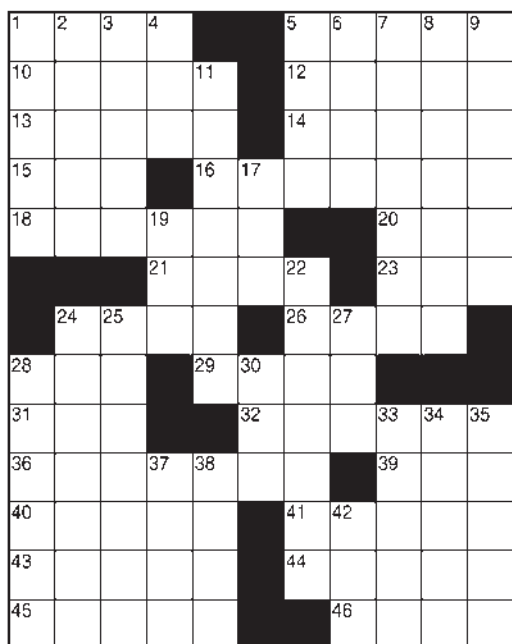
CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 41 Nearby
- 1 Uncloody
- 5 Nigerian some z's city
- 10 Make sense
- 12 Without aid
- 13 Italian physicist
- 14 Gun-powder ingredient
- 15 Mine yield
- 16 Bureau-cratic hassle
- 18 Very popular
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- 21 Woeful cry
- 23 Important time
- 24 Show up
- 26 Diplomatic skill
- 28 Phoned copy
- 29 Phone assistant
- 31 Paris pal
- 32 View from Yemen
- 36 Carni-vore's craving
- 39 Price setting
- 40 Space visitor
- DOWN**
- 43 Caught
- 44 Safe spot
- 45 Undoes a dele
- 46 Stiff drink
- 1 Party gift
- 2 Find darling
- 3 Took it easy
- 4 Tire track
- 5 Hit the runway
- 6 Stepped down
- 7 "Can I talk to you?"
- 8 Self-contained
- 9 Venus's sister
- 11 Lets out early
- 17 Greek vowel
- 19 Deli meat
- 22 Prison sentence
- 24 Arthur's home
- 25 Rust, say
- 27 Help out
- 28 Electrical units
- 30 S&L offering
- 33 Hot spot
- 34 Art supporter
- 35 Deal maker
- 37 Convene
- 38 Finishes
- 42 Research site

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L O C A L S
A L A S R O S E T O
G E N T A V A L O N
O D D S B E M I N E

Yesterday's answer



2-15

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-15

CRYPTOQUOTE

NAGKZO AT DG EH JZFP, WSK

ZKZOGFB TQOAGV AT AG EH

JZFOK. — LAUKDO JSVD

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THE ONLY THING WE NEVER GET ENOUGH OF IS LOVE; AND THE ONLY THING WE NEVER GIVE ENOUGH OF IS LOVE. — HENRY MILLER

Cruise ship Schedule: September 03 - 24 2024

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
TUE	03	ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00 09.00	20.00 22.00	B C	1 1
WED	04	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	09.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	10	CELEBRITY BEYOND CARNIVAL CELEBRATION CARNIVAL VISTA	08.00 08.00 13.00	21.00 22.00 23.00	B C I	1 1 1
TUE	17	CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	24	CELEBRITY BEYOND CARNIVAL MAGIC	08.00 09.00	21.00 22.00	B C	1 1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Electrical power



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Supermarket hours



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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A hiring sign is displayed at a restaurant in Mount Prospect, Ill., Feb. 1, 2024.

Associated Press

Labor costs remain high for small businesses, but a report shows wage growth is slowing for some

By MAE ANDERSON
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Employee wages are one of the biggest costs for small businesses.

A new survey found some owners may be seeing a bit of relief when it comes to wages. But while some say wage growth has stabilized or slowed, others note they haven't seen any moderation in their industries yet.

The Paychex Small Business Employment Watch found hourly earnings growth for workers at firms with 50 employees or less dropped to 2.89% in August. It's the first time growth has dropped below 3% since January 2021.

"After holding steady for several months, hourly earnings growth continued to decelerate in August," said John Gibson, Paychex president and CEO. "Falling below three percent for the first time in three years is another notable signal that the labor market is moving closer to its pre-pandemic level." □

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Peter Frampton finally finds Rock & Roll Hall of Fame doors open to him

By **MARK KENNEDY**

AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — At the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony last year, Sheryl Crow was about to sing her hit “Everyday Is a Winding Road” when she invited a rock icon up on stage.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I have to bring out one of my heroes Peter Frampton,” she said as he appeared to huge cheers, slid on a Gibson electric guitar and made musical sparks immediately curl from the instrument.

Frampton was still jamming away when he got a hug from Crow and then Stevie Nicks. When he went into a blistering solo, there was a wide smile on his face. “That’s how you do it, Peter Frampton!” Crow screamed.

Call that electric performance a dress rehearsal. This year, Frampton finally will be inducted into the rock hall himself, an honor his fans believe is long overdue. The ceremony is Oct. 19 in Cleveland.

He thanks Crow for sharing her spotlight.

“I don’t think I would have been nominated had it not been for Sheryl pushing me out there,” he tells The Associated Press from



Peter Frampton performs during “Finale - The Farewell Tour” at Huntington Bank Pavilion on Sunday, July 28, 2019, in Chicago.

Associated Press

his home in Nashville. “I will always be indebted to her for a wonderful opportunity she gave me.”

Frampton earned his way into the hall in large part on the strength of his 1976 live double album “Frampton Comes Alive!” buoyed by the hit songs “Show Me the Way” and “Baby, I Love Your Way” that Rolling Stone magazine listed among the 50 greatest live albums of all time.

The guitarist-singer-song-

writer has been eligible for the hall since 1998. “I thought it just wasn’t going to happen and I got on with my life,” he says. “I never expect awards. Whatever comes my way, I’m honored and thrilled about.”

The opening of the door for Frampton coincided with a change in hall leadership in 2023 that led to key legacy acts getting invites, like Foreigner and Cher.

They’ll join Mary J. Blige, A

Tribe Called Quest, Kool & The Gang, Ozzy Osbourne, Dave Matthews Band, the late Jimmy Buffett, MC5, Dionne Warwick, Alexis Korner, John Mayall and Big Mama Thornton in the class of ‘24.

“I’m absolutely thrilled for Peter. He’s given his whole life to this business and he deserves as much as anyone does,” said bassist Rick Wills, who is going into the hall with Foreigner and who played with Frampton for

years, including co-writing “Do You Feel Like I Do?”

In her acceptance speech, Crow revealed that in 1976 when she was 14, she and six teen friends caught Frampton in concert in Memphis, Tennessee. “I got to sing along with tens of thousands of strangers to ‘Do You Feel Like I Do?’” She called it a pivotal moment. Perhaps more than any musician, Frampton was associated with the talk box, a guitar effect that runs a tube from an amplifier to the mouth, creating a sound both psychedelic and robotic, a technique that has been used by everyone from Mötley Crüe to Pink Floyd.

“I’ve never been about the bravado of being a star. I’ve never thought of myself that way. I’m a lifelong musician and I just want to be able to play as long as I can,” he says.

“I speak through my guitar I think more than I do with words. I think more emotion and soul comes from my notes that I play and than anything I could ever say.” Major awards until recently have eluded Frampton, who had his music played in films like “Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle,” “Dazed and Confused” and “The Banger Sisters.” □

Mel B joins a campaign calling for a new U.K. law to bar Afro hair discrimination

By **SYLVIA HUI**

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Former Spice Girl Mel B is among dozens of Black Britons urging Parliament to update the country’s equality laws and prohibit Afro hair discrimination.

In an open letter to lawmakers on Tuesday, campaigners including Mel B, singer Beverley Knight and lawmaker Paulette Hamilton called for the U.K. to introduce a law to recognize Afro hair as a protected characteristic.

“For too long, people with Afro hair have experienced unjust treatment in U.K. society and the current law is not direct enough to govern businesses, schools and

the public to prevent serious harm,” read the open letter, released ahead of

World Afro Day on Sunday. “The omission of hair as a protected characteristic



Singer Mel B poses for photographers upon arrival at the premiere of the film ‘The Truth’ and the opening gala of the 76th edition of the Venice Film Festival, Venice, Italy, on Aug. 28, 2019.

Associated Press

from the law has facilitated everyday discrimination and the normalization of Afro hair as inferior in every sphere of life,” it added.

Mel B wrote that her “big wild curly hair” drew unwanted attention for her as a child and later as a pop-star.

“The very first video shoot I did as a Spice Girl for ‘Wannabe,’ the stylists took one look at my hair and told me it had to be straightened,” she said.

“My big hair didn’t fit the pop star mold.” She said she stood her ground and did not change her hair, and women still tell her how the 1990s music video inspired them to stop straightening their hair.

Racial discrimination based on hairstyles has been a topic of debate and lawsuits in the United States for some time. Earlier this year a trial took place in Texas involving a Black student who was suspended from his school for wearing twisted dreadlocks. Texas and Michigan are among two dozen U.S. states that recently introduced laws intended to bar employers and schools from penalizing people because of hairstyles including Afros, braids, dreadlocks, twists or Bantu knots.

In July, the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico passed similar anti-discrimination legislation. □

Sidney Crosby says he's 'pretty optimistic' about getting an extension done with the Penguins

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Sidney Crosby doesn't know when the deal will be signed. The Pittsburgh Penguins captain is also confident an agreement isn't far away. Speaking at the NHL/NHLPA player media tour's North American leg Monday, Crosby said he expects to ink a contract extension before the team opens the regular season on Oct. 9. "I'm pretty optimistic it's going to get done," the three-time Stanley Cup champion said in a ballroom at the glitzy Encore hotel on the Las Vegas Strip. "I don't know what day specifically, but it's been really positive. It hasn't been a difficult process at all."

Eligible to put pen to paper since July 1, Crosby is set to enter the final season of a 12-year, \$104.4 million deal that carries an \$8.7 million salary cap hit matching his No. 87 jersey.

The Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia, native made the playoffs in 16 consecutive seasons from 2007 through 2022, but he and the Penguins missed out the last two springs as they try to re-



Pittsburgh Penguins' Sidney Crosby looks on during the second period of an NHL hockey game against the New York Islanders, April 17, 2024, in Elmont, N.Y.

Associated Press

tool around an aging core of Crosby, Evgeni Malkin, Kris Letang and Erik Karlsson.

Pittsburgh fell a point short of making it in 2022-23 before missing out by three in April.

"We've been right there," Crosby said. "We finished really strong. We all felt

pretty good about hanging in there the way that we did.

We're just hoping that we can be a little more consistent in a few areas."

He is coming off a 42-goal, 94-point campaign that saw him finish tied for 12th in the league scoring race and is showing no signs of

slowing down.

Crosby, 37, will enter 2024-25 just four points shy of 1,600 for his career and was named one of Canada's first six players for the 4 Nations Face-Off tournament in February the closest thing men's hockey has had to a best-on-best tournament since the 2016

World Cup of Hockey

"You don't really know the trajectory of everything and how you're going to feel mentally, physically," Crosby said when asked how long he plans to continue playing. "All you can do is really just each year evaluate it and go from there ... I feel really good. I'm (as) excited about going to training camp as I was my first year. The passion and that sort of thing is all there."

The Penguins, however, don't appear close to being a top contender to winning another championship. General manager and president of hockey operations Kyle Dubas is trying to walk the line of staying competitive with a nucleus on the wrong side of 30, while at the same time also looking to an eventual future that doesn't include Crosby and Co.

Pittsburgh dealt star forward and pending unrestricted free agent Jake Guentzel ahead of last season's trade deadline despite being in the playoff hunt. □

Kyle Larson expected to return to Indianapolis 500 for another shot at 'The Double' in 2025

By JENNA FRYER

AP Auto Racing Writer

CONCORD, N.C. (AP) —

Hendrick Motorsports and Arrow McLaren Racing scheduled a Tuesday afternoon news conference in which they are expected to announce Kyle Larson will run the Indianapolis 500 again in 2025.

Larson told The Associated Press last week he wanted to run the race again, talks were ongoing, and a decision could be imminent. The initial deal was for two years but 2025 was an option and Hendrick Motorsports had a three-month window to make the decision.

"I would love to because I didn't get to do 'The Double' this year. So that's

really why I wanted to do it," Larson told the AP last week. "I obviously wanted to compete in the Indianapolis 500, but more than anything, I wanted to do 'The Double' and have a chance at winning one of the two, or both, and I felt like I just didn't get that opportunity."

Larson was a star at Indianapolis Motor Speedway in May, where he qualified fifth but a late-race speeding penalty took him out of contention and he finished 18th. An hours-long rain delay in Indianapolis pushed the Hendrick camp into leaving Larson at the 500 and they would deal with the Coca-Cola 600 in Concord, North Carolina, later.

Except by the time Larson arrived in North Carolina, the 600 had been stopped by rain and never resumed. He never turned a lap, received zero points for the event, and it took a prolonged dispute between Hendrick officials and NASCAR before NASCAR granted Larson a waiver to participate in the playoffs despite missing a race.

In the end, missing the 600 did cost Larson as he fell a single point short of beating Tyler Reddick for NASCAR's regular-season championship a title worth 15 additional playoff points. Larson could use those points after an early crash Sunday in NASCAR's playoff opener erased al-

most his entire lead in the Sprint Cup standings.

Initially the points leader at the start of Sunday's race at Atlanta, Larson plummeted to 10th in the

standings. Four drivers will be eliminated from the 16-driver playoff field following the Sept. 21 race at Bristol Motor Speedway. □



Kyle Larson, left, talks with Tony Kanaan following the Indianapolis 500 auto race at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Sunday, May 26, 2024, in Indianapolis.

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Baltimore Ravens tight end Isaiah Likely (80) catches a pass with his toe out of bounds as Kansas City Chiefs linebacker Nick Bolton and linebacker Drue Tranquill, left, defend as time expires in the second half of an NFL football game Thursday, Sept. 5, 2024, in Kansas City, Mo.

Associated Press

Players blame football fields, themselves as they slip and slide through the NFL's opening weekend

By ARNIE STAPLETON
AP Pro Football Writer

So many players had trouble with their footing on the NFL's opening weekend. It began with Isaiah Likely's touchdown-negating toe-tap at the back of the end zone at Arrowhead Stadium and continued throughout a waxy weekend that featured the Eagles and Packers slipping and sliding their way around Sao Paulo's Corinthians Arena soccer pitch as the league expanded its global footprint with its debut in Latin America's largest country. Every game stateside also saw its share of missteps, even those played indoors like the one at Ford Field, where the Lions blamed themselves and not the turf after stumbling their way to an overtime win against the Rams. The Lions might have won it in regulation if not for a trio of slip-ups on their final drive that ended with a field goal. Jared Goff sailed a would-be touchdown throw over the head of Jahmyr Gibbs, who stumbled as he ran open in the Rams' secondary with about a minute remaining. Amon-Ra St. Brown lost his footing on an incompletion two plays later and Kalif Raymond fell down on a third-down misfire before Jake Bates' field goal tied it.

After the Lions found their footing in overtime for a 26-20 win, Detroit wide receiver Jameson Williams suggested the issue wasn't a slippery surface but the rusty Lions themselves. Practicing on grass and with so many vets sitting out the preseason, it takes some time to get reacclimated to the artificial grass, Williams said. The problem ran deeper in Brazil, where the converted soccer field was covered with divots by halftime of Philadelphia's 34-29 win over Green Bay. Saquon Barkely, who otherwise shined in his Eagles debut, slipped for a 5-yard loss on his first carry for Philadelphia. Packers receiver Christian Watson missed out on a touchdown catch when he slipped in the end zone and Green Bay running back Emanuel Wilson fell on the seat of his pants as he tried to cut after a 14-yard gain. When Jordan Love got hurt in his first game since signing a \$220 million contract extension, newly acquired backup Malik Willis came in for one final play but slipped in the pocket and was sacked by Zach Baun before he could even heave a Hail Mary. □

NBA expands permissible scope of coach's challenge reviews on some out-of-bounds plays

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The NBA has expanded the permissible scope of coach's challenge reviews on some out-of-bounds plays, saying Tuesday that if a foul should have been called on the play it now can be assessed shortly after the fact. The league's Board of Governors approved the move at its meeting in New York, after it was unanimously recommended by the league's competition committee last week. NBA Commissioner Adam Silver was scheduled to speak about the meeting later Tuesday. The change will take effect this season. The review change could have come into play at least once in last season's playoffs, when Dallas' Kyrie Irving fouled Minnesota's Jaden McDaniels and the ball went out of bounds. No foul was called on the play, and even though the review clearly showed Irving hitting McDaniels' arm the ball was awarded to Dallas because it went out off of McDaniels. When such out-of-bounds plays have reviews triggered by coaches challenging now, on-court officials and the NBA Replay Center "will be able to review the video to determine whether a foul proximate to the violation should have been called," the league said, providing that certain criteria are met. Those criteria: whether the players involved in the uncalled foul are the same or different players than the ones involved in the out-of-bounds violation under review, and how much time has elapsed between the uncalled foul and the violation. □



NBA Commissioner Adam Silver talks to reporters before Game 1 of basketball's NBA Finals between the Boston Celtics and the Dallas Mavericks, Thursday, June 6, 2024, in Boston.

Associated Press